

## Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W

-----151204Z 046952 /15

R 150734Z FEB 77

FM AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6451

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY DHAHRAHAN

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY VICTORIA

S E C R E T PORT LOUIS 0125

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MORG PK KE IR BA MU SA MP

SUBJECT: MIDDLE EAST FORCE -- THE NEW FORMAT

REF: STATE 030235

1. IN ASSESSING THE MAURITIAN GOVERNMENT'S PROBABLE ATTITUDE TOWARD NEW ARRANGEMENTS FOR MIDEASTFOR, TWO ASPECTS OF ITS OVERALL POSTURE MUST BE BORNE IN MIND:

(A) GOM SUPPORT FOR INDIAN OCEAN ZONE OF PEACE (IOZP) PROPOSAL, WHICH THOUGH NOT PARTICULARLY ACTIVE AT PRESENT NEVERTHELESS REMAINS FERVENT.

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THIS MEANS THAT GOM NOT ONLY OPPOSES FOREIGN MILITARY BASES IN AREA BUT ALSO NAVAL PRESENCE OF SUPER-POWERS. THIS LATTER OPPOSITION IS SOMEWHAT THEORETICAL, HOWEVER, SINCE GOM HAS CONTINUED TO WELCOME PORT VISITS BY AMERICAN, SOVIET, FRENCH AND BRITISH NAVAL VESSELS. THESE PORT VISITS ARE HARDLY CONSTRUED AS "SUPPORT," NO MATTER HOW NECESSARY

THEY MAY BE FOR VESSELS IN QUESTION.

(B) GOM OBJECTION TO THE EXPANSION OF THE U.S. NAVY'S PRESENCE ON DIEGO GARCIA, WHICH FORMERLY BELONGED TO MAURITIUS (PRIOR TO INDEPENDENCE) AND WHOSE MINERAL RIGHTS ARE RETAINED BY GOM. THIS ISSUE HAS NOT BEEN A VOCAL ONE IN MAURITIUS RECENTLY, DESPITE FACT COUNTRY HAS RECENTLY PASSED THROUGH PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS. GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN RATHER MUTED ON SUBJECT, BUT STRONG MARXIST-ORIENTED OPPOSITION PARTY, THE MAURITIAN MILITANT MOVEMENT (MMM), HAS KEPT AGITATING THE QUESTION AND CASTIGATING GOVERNMENT FOR PAST SIN OF HAVING "SOLD" DIEGO GARCIA TO BRITISH AND FOR CONTINUING TO "PERMIT" AMERICANS TO USE IT AS A MILITARY BASE. JUST RECENTLY THE MMM SECRETARY GENERAL, PAUL BERENGER, HAS BEEN PROMOTING THE IDEA OF HOLDING A CONFERENCE IN TANANARIVE OF THE "SOCIALIST AND PROGRESSIVE PARTIES" OF THE INDIAN OCEAN AREA (I.E., RULING GROUPS IN MADAGASCAR AND COMOROS, SPUP OF SEYCHELLES, COMMUNIST PARTY OF REUNION AND THE MMM) TO DEAL WITH, AMONG OTHER THINGS, THE "DEMILITARIZATION OF THE INDIAN OCEAN." THE RULING COALITION OF THE LABOR PARTY AND MAURITIAN SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY, WHICH ENJOYS ONLY A TWO-SEAT MAJORITY IN PARLIAMENT, CANNOT AFFORD TO BE "SOFT" ON THE QUESTION OF DIEGO GARCIA OR THE IOZP.

2. IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT WE COULD OBTAIN A GOM "COMMITMENT" TO ASSURE MIDEASTFOR FLAGSHIP EXTENDED VISITS AT PORT LOUIS AS OUTLINED REFTEL. AT THE SAME TIME, BELIEVE WE COULD

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OBTAIN PERMISSION FOR TWO VISITS A YEAR OF TWO WEEKS EACH WITHOUT DIFFICULTY, SO LONG AS THESE WERE PRESENTED AS "ROUTINE OPERATIONAL VISITS" SUCH AS LA SALLE HAS MADE IN PAST, ONLY OF LONGER DURATION. ONE SUCH EXTENDED VISIT A YEAR WOULD BE EASIER TO ARRANGE THAN TWO.

3. THE SERIOUS PROBLEM LIES IN THE REQUIREMENT THAT THE BAHRAIN GOVERNMENT BE ABLE TO STATE ACCURATELY THAT IT IS NOT THE ONLY COUNTRY WHICH PROVIDES SUPPORT TO UNITS OF THE FORCE" (PARA SIX, REFTEL). THE KEY WORD IS "SUPPORT." WERE "ACCESS TO PORTS" TO BE SUBSTITUTED FOR "SUPPORT" THE PROBLEM WOULD BE GREATLY MINIMIZED. WERE MAURITIUS TO BE CITED AS ONE OF THE COUNTRIES PROVIDING THE "SUPPORT," I FEAR THAT THAT WOULD RENDER IMPOSSIBLE ANY PORT VISITS BY THE LA SALLE HERE. BY THE SAME TOKEN WERE REQUESTS TO THE GOM FOR EXTENDED PORT VISITS TO BE CHARACTERIZED AS "SUPPORT" FOR MIDEASTFOR, I FEEL SURE PERMISSION WOULD BE DENIED.

4. LA SALLE AND OTHER MIDEASTFOR UNITS HAVE MADE FREQUENT

VISITS TO PORT LOUIS IN PAST, BUT OF COURSE MUCH LESS FREQUENTLY SINCE SUEZ CANAL REOPENED. WE HAVE CERTAINLY NOT OVER-BURDENED PORT LOUIS RECENTLY. PLANNED VISIT OF USS LONO BEACH LATER THIS MONTH WILL BE FIRST BY A US NAVY VESSEL IN A YEAR. BELIEVE MORE FREQUENT VISITS IN FUTURE WOULD BE WELCOMED, EVEN FOR LONGER STAYS, SO LONG AS THEY ARE PRESENTED AS NOT REALLY DIFFERENT FROM PAST ROUTINE OPERATIONAL VISITS. THERE SHOULD BE NO PROBLEM ABOUT CARRYING OUT SELF-MAINTENANCE HERE, AND SOME LOGISTIC SUPPORT BY AIR MIGHT ALSO BE POSSIBLE.

5. CONSIDERATION MIGHT BE GIVEN TO PRESENTING NEW FORMAT FOR LA SALLE AS ITS TRANSFORMATION INTO A "FLOATING COMMAND" WITH NO HOME PORT IN THE AREA, OR A THEORETICAL OR ACTUAL HOME PORT IN THE US, RATHER THAN TALKING ABOUT "SUPPORT" BEING SHARED BY A NUMBER OF COUNTRIES IN THE AREA.

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6. THERE WOULD BE NO PROBLEM OF EXTRA BURDEN ON THIS EMBASSY FOR NUMBER OF VISITS PROPOSED, AND IT WOULD PROBABLY BE BETTER NOT TO HAVE SPECIAL LIAISON/SUPPORT PERSONNEL FROM MIDEASTFOR IN ORDER NOT TO CALL ATTENTION TO THE CHANGED NATURE OF LA SALLE'S PORT VISITS.

7. TO SUMMARIZE, IT WOULD PROBABLY NOT BE POSSIBLE TO OBTAIN COMMITMENT FROM GOM FOR EXTENDED VISITS BY FLAGSHIP, AND IT WOULD BE BETTER NOT TO ASK, IF FUTURE PORT VISITS ARE CONTEMPLATED. IF IT WERE STATED PUBLICLY BY ANY SOURCE THAT MAURITIUS WAS PARTICIPATING IN A MULTI-COUNTRY EFFORT TO PROVIDE SUPPORT TO MIDEASTFOR, THAT WOULD PROBABLY MEAN THE END OF ACCESS TO PORT LOUIS FOR US NAVY SHIPS. HOWEVER, IF WE SIMPLY REQUESTED PERMISSION ROUTINELY FOR ONE OR TWO EXTENDED PORT VISITS BY THE FLAGSHIP WITHOUT CHANGING THE CONTEXT FROM THE PAST, BELIEVE THIS WOULD BE GRANTED.

KEELEY

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